

ARTS & CULTURE

A RENAISSANCE IN CAPE TOWN



Once the tallest building crowning Cape Town's skyline, the 42 concrete tubes of the Grain Silo Complex—each silo 33 metres in height and 5.5 metres in diameter—were an eyesore and an icon, all in one. Falling into disrepair and occupying prime Table Bay waterfront land, hot debate surrounded these now-disused agricultural relics. But a decision was made—to create a first-of-its-kind museum inside these grain silos. "They used diamond-cutting tools to sculpt the interior spaces," says guide and assistant curator Kimberly Jacobs, noting that it was a rather monumental task.

But Zeitz MOCAA opened last year, just in time for this year's centenary of Nelson Mandela's birth—a milestone that's being marked by celebrations across the country. The largest (and most significant) museum of contemporary African art in the world, its one hundred galleries over nine floors tell important stories through various mediums, from animation to avant-garde sculpture, and everything in between. >>

The iconic industrial design of these silos was reimagined as a cultural institution that now houses contemporary African art zeitzmocaa. museum

new vision

WIANELLE BRIERS

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The art scene in this city is becoming as big as its scenery



arts & culture

>> After wandering the galleries for a solid morning, I decide to get a little closer to the artists in their own spaces, heading out to one of hottest post-apartheid hotbeds for creativity, a township outside of the city proper called Langa. Once a site of segregation, now the Langa Quarter marshals the artistic talents of its local residents, actively bringing in visitors in a once-overlooked part of town, says Tony Elvin, the CEO of the initiative. "We're bringing together art and music and food and hospitality," he says, noting that they've even opened an Airbnb. "To get a sense of the place, you really need to be able to sleep there."

Elvin leads our small group through the streets, lined with little homes, which teem with life, a place not so different from another township, Soweto, where Mandela himself found his intellectual and leadership footing. As we move block to block, happy kids ride by on the bikes or follow along behind us on foot, seeing what's up, while smiling stoop-sitters wave at our little convoy.

We meet a number of artists in their studios, which often double as their place of residence—a man who makes glass mosaics, another whose living room is lined with his striking portraits, a pottery workshop where anyone can come in and fire for free, most (or all) of them training another generation of artists to follow them. We finish on a square covered in graffiti. "Langa has now become a magnet for very cool street art," Elvin smiles.

Hungry, we head to 4Roomed, in the nearby township of Khayelitsha. It's a sunny space that seats just 40, a place that inspires hope and resurgence. In this case, chef Abigail Mbalo turned a televised run on South Africa's version of Top Chef into a food truck, and now a bright bricks-and-mortar restaurant in a carriage-house space that resembles the four-room homes of her childhood.

[STAY]
At the five-star Table Bay Hotel. Located on the Victoria & Albert Waterfront, it's within walking distance of the Zeitz MOCAA and other top attractions. the-table-bay-hotels-capetown.com

And the food draws on that legacy, too, culinary art inspired by traditional recipes, with a fresh, local twist when it comes to the ingredients. I tuck into a salad made with greens from backyard gardens, fresh-baked bread paired with vegetable curry, an orange and lemon cake. Sated after a delicious meal, I'm ready to go ahead—more artists to meet, more galleries to explore. — *Tim Johnson*

View from Lion's Head in Cape Town, with Table Mountain in the background



Street scene in Langa



Silo structure inside the Zeitz MOCAA



Art by Mary Sibande in Zeitz MOCAA



Street art in Langa

IF YOU GO Plan to spend at least half a day at Zeitz MOCAA, Africa's largest and most significant museum of contemporary art. zeitzmocaa.museum Plan your trip at southafrica.net

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SOUTH AFRICA TOURISM; MARK WILLIAMS; TIM JOHNSON (3)